

## Unit II: Grace and Reconciliation

# A Generous and Forgiving Parent

DEVOTIONAL READING: Mark 1:14-20

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 1:10-21; Ezekiel 18:20-23, 27-32;  
Mark 2:1-12; Luke 3:1-14; 15:11-24; Acts 2:32-39; Hebrews 11:1-10

PRINT PASSAGES: Luke 15:11-24; Acts 2:38-39

### KEY VERSE

This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. (Luke 15:24, KJV)

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“This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.” (Luke 15:24, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Communicate the role of repentance in your faith journey.
- Identify in yourself (a) the younger son’s repentance; (b) the elder son’s resentment; (c) the father’s generosity.
- Act with generosity toward sinners, including yourself.

### \*Key Terms

**Children (Acts 2:39)**—Greek: *teknon* (tek’-non): offspring (by natural descent); in a broader sense, posterity.

**Divided (Luke 15:12)**—Greek: *diaireó* (dee-ahee-reh’-o): distributed (between); separated.

**Famine (Luke 15:14)**—Greek: *limos* (lee-mos’): hunger; dearth; a period of food scarcity often resulting from drought.

**Had compassion (Luke 15:20)**—Greek: *splagchnizomai* (splangkhn-id’-zom-ahee): had an empathetic feeling of pity or consideration for another; felt sympathy; “was filled with compassion” (NIV).



## The Biblical Context

Luke, a Gentile physician and Paul's traveling companion, authored the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, providing the biblical context for this lesson's Print Passages. Luke composed this two-part volume for Theophilus, an unidentified person, to provide a chronological and orderly account of Jesus' life and ministry and a reliable historical account of the early church. Luke's gospel was also written to convey the Gospel's significance after Christ's resurrection, and record the church's growth and expansion. The immediate context for Luke 15 is in Luke 9:51–19:27, describing Jesus' journey to Jerusalem for the Passover before His death on the cross. This part of the book primarily consists of Jesus' teachings and parables given on the road to people He encountered. A key theme in this section is Jesus' continuing ministry and compassion for the poor, the outcasts, and sinners. His association with this part of Israel's society fueled debates and criticism from the Pharisees and scribes, prompting Jesus to confront their pride and hypocrisy. One of these confrontations is the setting for this parable regarding the lost son (see Luke 15:11-14).

The context for the lesson's passage from the book of Acts (Acts 2:38-39) is the people's reaction to Peter's sermon following Jesus' ascension to heaven and the Holy Spirit's descent on the disciples. Deeply convicted by the realization that they were guilty of rejecting and crucifying the Messiah, they asked what they needed to do to be saved. Peter explained their need for salvation and how to receive it. Both passages proclaim the good news: repentance leads to conviction, confession leads to forgiveness, and God the Father stands ready to extend grace and reconciliation to the lost.

**Portion (Luke 15:12)**—Greek: *meros* (mer'-os): a piece or division; a part or "share" (NIV).

**Prodigally (Luke 15:13)**—Greek: *asótós* (as-o'-toce): recklessly; wastefully; "with riotous" (KJV) living; "in wild" (NIV) living.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

## Introduction

Interpersonal relationships are the connections people build with one another, like families, friends, romantic partners, and even coworkers. These relationships play a big role in personal growth and overall well-being. When they're healthy, they help meet emotional needs and give a sense of belonging. But, relationships aren't always easy. They can break down, especially when people start focusing only on themselves and what they want. Holding grudges, not communicating well, jealousy, betrayal, or even cultural and political differences can cause tension in relationships. Sadly, these same issues can show up in church too, making it hard for believers to stay united.

Many interpersonal conflicts could be mended through a willingness to apologize, make amends, and extend forgiveness. However, from a spiritual perspective, the most critical relationship a believer must safeguard is their connection with God. While this relationship can never be lost for those in Christ, it can suffer damage through unconfessed sin, neglecting spiritual disciplines, pride, and self-reliance. Yet—in His boundless grace—God, like the father in Jesus' parable of the lost son, is always ready to welcome His children back. Whenever we repent and turn to Christ, He restores and reconciles us, reaffirming His unwavering love for us.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### A Son's Rebellion (*Luke 15:11-20a*)

#### KJV

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father.

#### NIV

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

12 "The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

14 "After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

15 "So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

16 "He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

18 "I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

19 "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.'

20 "So he got up and went to his father."

The parable of the prodigal son is the third and final parable Jesus used to respond to the Pharisees' and scribes' criticism of His choice to fellowship with tax collectors and sinners (see Luke 15:1-2). Unlike the previous two parables, the lost sheep and the lost coin, this story depicts a son lost by intentional choice. The younger of a man's two sons deliberately rebels against his father and strays away after selfishly demanding his share of his father's estate before the father's death, possibly implying that he wished his father was dead. Regardless, the father grants his request, dividing his estate and giving the younger son his portion (verses 11-12). The son leaves home, squandering his inheritance on reckless and extravagant living. When a severe famine strikes, he finds himself penniless, desperate, and reduced to lowly labor to survive (verses 13-15). The son of a wealthy Jewish landowner was reduced to feeding pigs, animals considered ceremonially unclean in Jewish culture. Worse still, he was so poor that he longed to eat the pods given to the pigs—yet no one offered him anything (verse 16). Ironically, these pods, the carob tree's fleshy fruit, are fit for human consumption. But in this moment of desperation, the prodigal realized that even these unclean animals were eating better than he was.

Then, in verse 17, he finally comes to his senses. Comparing his miserable condition to that of his father's lowest hired servants, he realized that even they had more than enough to eat while he was starving to death. Recognizing his rebellion, dishonor toward his father, and sin against heaven, he repented, returns home, confessed, and sought his father's forgiveness and restoration (verses 18-20a). Through this parable, Jesus beautifully illustrates the steps of true conversion leading to salvation: acknowledging sin as rebellion against God, confessing it, and repenting by turning from sin to God with a contrite heart and seeking His forgiveness. Jesus also exposes the self-righteous and uncaring attitude of the Pharisees and scribes concerning those they identified as sinners by illustrating that no sinner is beyond redemption if they are convicted to recognize their sin, confess it, and seek God's forgiveness.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How are we guilty of rebelling against God and living recklessly?

## A Father's Grace (*Luke 15:20b-24; Acts 2:38-39*)

### KJV

**20 But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.**

**21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.**

**22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:**

**23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:**

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

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38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

## NIV

20 “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

23 “‘Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate.

24 “‘For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

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38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

After the conviction of his sin, the prodigal son intended to greet his father and beg for forgiveness. Yet, he did not get the opportunity to do so because when his loving father saw him returning while still at a distance, he ran to meet, embrace, and kiss him (verse 20b). The father’s actions reflect God’s attitude toward repenting sinners. Because of His profound love, God meets them where they are and saves them by the grace made possible by Jesus’ death on the Cross. In this story, Jesus responds to the Pharisees and scribes by showing why He spends time with sinners. He tells about a father who runs to welcome his rebellious son home. This was surprising because in Jewish culture, older men didn’t run, and the son could have been punished harshly for his disrespect, but the father didn’t care about any of that. He ignored the rules, hugged his son, didn’t even let him finish his apology, and immediately threw a big party to celebrate his return (verses 21-23). The robe, ring, and sandals the prodigal son received signified the restoration of their relationship and position in the family. The feast was his father’s way of expressing his joy and inviting others to celebrate with him. Again, Jesus gives a subtle message to His critics: those they rejected are welcomed into God’s presence.

Verse 24 provides the reason for this call to celebrate—his spiritually and relationally “dead” son was restored to “life” and fellowship with him. Every lost soul convicted of sin who genuinely

acknowledges their rebellion against God, confesses, repents, and comes to God through Jesus Christ is promised this spiritual experience: grace and restoration into God's family. This same message is embedded in Luke's record of Peter's response to the Jews' question about what they needed to do after hearing and being convicted by his sermon in Acts 2:38-39. Peter urged them to repent like the prodigal son did. This active repentance results in the forgiveness of sin and the promise of restoration into God's family for them and their descendants, signified by the Holy Spirit's presence. These passages vividly illustrate the loving heart of the heavenly Father, who gladly extends grace to His lost children and joyously welcomes them into His family. The faith community's challenge today is to avoid being present-day "Pharisees and scribes" and to emulate His love and compassion for the lost.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why does the faith community require an "attitude adjustment" regarding prioritizing evangelizing the lost?

## A Closing Thought

The parable of the prodigal son teaches an important lesson for the church: we should welcome and accept anyone who turns back to God through faith in Jesus. Just like the father in the story showed grace and forgiveness to his returning son, we are called to do the same. His act of running to embrace his son reminds us that the church should be a place of love and restoration, not judgment or rejection.

## Your Life

Jesus told this parable to critical Pharisees and scribes who looked down on and rejected sinners and tax collectors instead of ministering to them. Their uncaring attitude challenges us to examine our hearts to ensure that we are not guilty of condemning and judging the lost but of embracing those who repent with the same grace that God extends to all who come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ.

## Your World!

The church is often surrounded by modern-day "prodigals"—those who've been caught up or overwhelmed by the world's temptations. In this lesson, Jesus challenges us to re-evaluate our priorities and attitudes toward lost "prodigals" and prioritize guiding them toward restoration with God through genuine repentance. When they return, we must welcome them with the same grace, love, and acceptance that God offers to all who turn back to Him.

## Closing Prayer

Gracious heavenly Father, thank You for reminding us that no matter how far we stray, You will welcome us back and restore us when we repent and seek Your forgiveness. With the Holy

Spirit’s help, we pray to extend the same grace to the “prodigals” we encounter for Your glory, honor, and praise. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week’s Lesson)

Next week’s lesson challenges us to explore how to avoid self-righteousness and pride in our relationship with God and others. Read Genesis 18:25-27, 30-32; Luke 18:9-14; 1 John 5:14-15.

| Home Daily Bible Readings |                             |                     |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| MONDAY, January 12        | “Praying for Wisdom”        | (James 1:2-8)       |
| TUESDAY, January 13       | “Praying and Seeking God”   | (Jeremiah 29:10-14) |
| WEDNESDAY, January 14     | “Praying with Thanksgiving” | (Philippians 4:4-9) |
| THURSDAY, January 15      | “Praying for Protection”    | (Psalm 61)          |
| FRIDAY, January 16        | “Praying as Jesus Taught”   | (Matthew 6:5-15)    |
| SATURDAY, January 17      | “Praying for Others”        | (Genesis 18:23-33)  |
| SUNDAY, January 18        | “Praying for Mercy”         | (Luke 18:9-14)      |

Notes